



**AMERICAN
SCHOOL FOR
THE
DEAF**

ALL ways able.

Jeffrey S. Bravin,
Executive Director

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Appropriations Committee Hearing on Education

February 17, 2022

Testimony by Jeffrey S. Bravin, Executive Director (HB5037)

American School for the Deaf Birth-to-Three Program

Good afternoon. I am here before you today to request your support for additional funding for Connecticut's Birth-to-Three hearing specialty programs, including the American School for the Deaf Birth-to-Three Program.

Since 1976, ASD's Birth-to-Three Program has provided statewide comprehensive home and community-based services for deaf and hard of hearing infants and children, from birth to age three, and their families. As a hearing specialty provider within Connecticut's Birth-to-Three system, ASD works with families to develop appropriate service plans to meet the individual needs of each child and family. ASD focuses on developing the whole child, and our highly specialized audiologists, speech language pathologists, teachers of the deaf, occupational and physical therapists, social workers, and psychologists collaborate to ensure that the children enrolled in our Birth-to-Three program have the tools they need to develop a strong language foundation, which they will carry with them throughout their lives.

At ASD, we understand that every child is unique. We are the only option in the State to offer a bilingual environment where children and their families are exposed to both American Sign Language and spoken English. Imagine yourself as a new parent who discovers for the first time that your baby has a hearing loss. Your immediate reaction may include shock, sadness, or fear of the unknown. Since 95% of deaf babies are born to hearing parents, many parents do not have any prior knowledge about hearing loss, or the resources available to help them and their child. ASD understands this, and we know that parents and families of young deaf and hard of hearing children need support. They may feel overwhelmed with the choices available and are unsure where to turn. In addition to unbiased information regarding all options available for families, ASD also offers needed comfort and encouragement, while helping families look forward to everything tomorrow will bring.

ASD's Birth-to-Three program has historically carried a deficit. In recent years, the program has reached an annual deficit up to \$250,000. This year alone, during the time period of July – December 2021, the program is recording a deficit in the amount of \$118,000. Despite this deficit, ASD continues to operate the program because we understand the value in early intervention services for all children, especially those who are deaf or hard of hearing and at threat of language deprivation.

We join with our fellow Birth-to-Three hearing specialty providers to request a \$100 increase to the monthly General Administrative Payment (GAP) program, per

enrolled child. We also request a 10% interim rate increase to the current rate over the last five years to adjust for cost of living, as well as a one-time payment to programs based on enrollment.

It is important to note that although ASD's Core Pre-K through 12th grade academic program receives a State Appropriation every year, this funding cannot be used to support our Birth-to-Three program as this program is a separate entity from our academic programming licensed through the CT State Department of Education.

Connecticut families are counting on us. During these challenging times, we must all work together to support Connecticut's deaf and hard of hearing infants and children. I sincerely hope you will join me in advocating for the additional financial support of our Birth-to-Three hearing specialty programs. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey S. Bravin", written in a cursive style.

Jeffrey S. Bravin
Executive Director